

Barriers and Impediments to Transit Use

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One of the short range (through 2011) objectives of the 2020 Florida Transportation Plan is to increase transit ridership at twice the average rate of population growth. To this end, FDOT contracted the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) at the University of South Florida to investigate those operational barriers and impediments to transit use that transit agencies may rectify at little expense (*BC-137-11*). Researchers assessed a host of issues with the potential to become barriers to transit use by potential or existing transit users and then selected two for detailed study: (1) the user-friendliness of printed transit information materials and (2) the level of transit service provided to major activity centers.

To assess the user-friendliness of printed transit information, researchers conducted a field test wherein participants were asked to plan specific transit trips using only the transit information materials provided to them. The results indicate that non-users have tremendous difficulty using transit information materials to plan transit trips and that they experience high levels of anxiety in relation to transit trip planning activities. Most participants were unable to plan both simple and complex transit trips using the transit information materials presented, which suggests that they possess little knowledge regarding the manner in which transit operates. Thus, researchers developed recommendations to assist transit agencies to make printed information materials more user-friendly and understandable.

Researchers also examined whether and to what degree transit service is accessing major activity centers in Florida. Data on operating hours and transit service were organized into six land use categories (airports, medical, shopping, business/government, education, and recreation) and compared in order to determine the level of transit service provided to these activity centers. Some land use categories, such as business/government, have a wide range of bus routes accessing the activity centers each hour of activity center operation on weekdays and a relatively high maximum number of buses per activity center operating hour. This may be attributable to the fact that business/government activity centers typically are located in downtown areas. The activity centers categorized under the airport and medical land use categories receive the lowest level of transit service because they are 24-hour per day operations and none of the transit systems included in the analysis provide 24-hour service. Researchers provided recommendations to assist the Florida Department of Transportation and transit systems in Florida to further address and evaluate the effectiveness of transit scheduling in relation to customer travel demands.

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